Beta myBB Forum
Application Administrator Guide
Center for New Media and Citizen Engagement (CNMCE)

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Version 2.0

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General Overview

Internet forums are communication tools. A modern version of the “bulletin board”, a forum is generally a meeting ground for people with similar interests, normally focused on a single topic or a small group of related topics. The goal is to develop a community of users engaged in a lively discussion, commonly including questions, comparisons, opinion polls, and debates. Attached to each topic will be a string of user-generated posts (collectively called a “thread”), usually listed chronologically.

Administration

Forums are governed by designated administrators and moderators, who are responsible for the forums' conception, technical maintenance, and policies (creation and enforcing). An administrator manages the technical details required for running the site (see *Getting* Started, page 4). Main administrative tasks include promoting members to moderators, creating forums and subforums, organizing visitors and logged-in members into pre-defined user groups, and setting “permissions” levels (see *Permissions (Pre-defined Groups)*, page 9). These determine such things as user access to particular forums, whether a user may start a new topic or only post replies to existing topics, and whether a user is allowed to initiate voting polls. Administrators often also act as moderators, and are allowed to make forum-wide announcements.

Moderators

A forum’s day-to-day user interactions are managed by moderators, forum users who are granted access to the posts and threads of all members for the purpose of moderating discussion and keeping the forum clean. Moderators also answer general questions, address users' concerns, and respond to specific complaints. They may have ranks: some may only have privileges in a particular forum (or topic), while others may be allowed access anywhere (see *Moderation Queues and Threading*, page 12).

Users

Many forums require a user to provide some basic personal information and register as a member before allowing full access. They frequently organize registered members into topic-oriented user groups. Different privileges and rights can be assigned to different groups, and forums will often allow only registered users to post. Unregistered users are commonly known as visitors or guests, and typically are allowed only viewing privileges. Occasionally an administrator will disallow visitors from even reading the forum as an incentive to become a registered member.

Rules

Most forums have a list of rules that the creators expect users to follow, and a FAQ section containing basic site use information for new members and guests unfamiliar with the forum. Rules on forums usually apply to the entire user body but can have exceptions, and moderators can limit access or completely bar users who violate the guidelines.

Posts

Posted messages appear as a series of stacked boxes, and include the user’s details, the date and time, and often a reference to the topic (sometimes called the original post, or OP). Posts usually require a minimum number of characters, and have a maximum limit on length. Forums also usually have a private message (PM) capability, allowing users to engage in personal conversations that don’t appear in the topic’s thread, and some allow attachments and customized text formatting.

Visibility

The key to getting a new forum off the ground is visibility. Pay attention to what is known as search engine optimization (SEO), making sure that your information paragraphs, topic titles, and posts contain keywords that increase your site’s exposure (see *Appendix B: SEO*, page 16). Tell people about your site, post on other forums, and take any opportunity to set up backlinks to your forum from other sites that are related (see *Appendix C: Backlinks*, page 19).

Forum Tips

- Start small. A few forums with lots of posts make the site appear more active.
- Define a simple set of rules outlining what is acceptable and what is not.
- Ensure that pages outside of the forum structure load quickly and provide easy access to the forum.
- Invite subject matter experts to participate, or ask them to post articles about the topic to spur discussion. The more experts you can get to contribute, the better-known your forum will become.
- Regularly start new threads or discussions about current “hot topics”.
- Encourage member-submitted articles.
- Don’t be invisible. Actively participate in the discussions by posting your own replies and new questions. Be sure to respond to every first post by a new member.
- Develop a strategy for building a group of moderators who have diverse opinions and styles, and who are skilled at managing conflict.
- Work diligently to keep “noise” from distracting the conversations (i.e., useless comments, spam, "me too" posts).
- Show your appreciation by sending your members emails or private messages thanking them for their contributions. Let them know you listen to their requests and concerns.
- Find ways to reward your most active members, such as posting announcements thanking regularly contributing participants.
- Promptly address any problems or disagreements that arise between members. Be quick to intervene in any nasty arguments, personal attacks or unsubstantiated accusations.
- Always send an email welcoming new members. If possible, create a chat room or bio type of forum where newcomers can meet regular members.
- Participate in events that are likely to be attended by your target audience so you can let them know about your forum.
- Create a space that allows off-topic discussion. The more your members interact, the more likely they are to visit regularly.

This document provides basic information necessary to initiate and begin to manage your forum. You can control-click on any page cross-reference to navigate around the document.

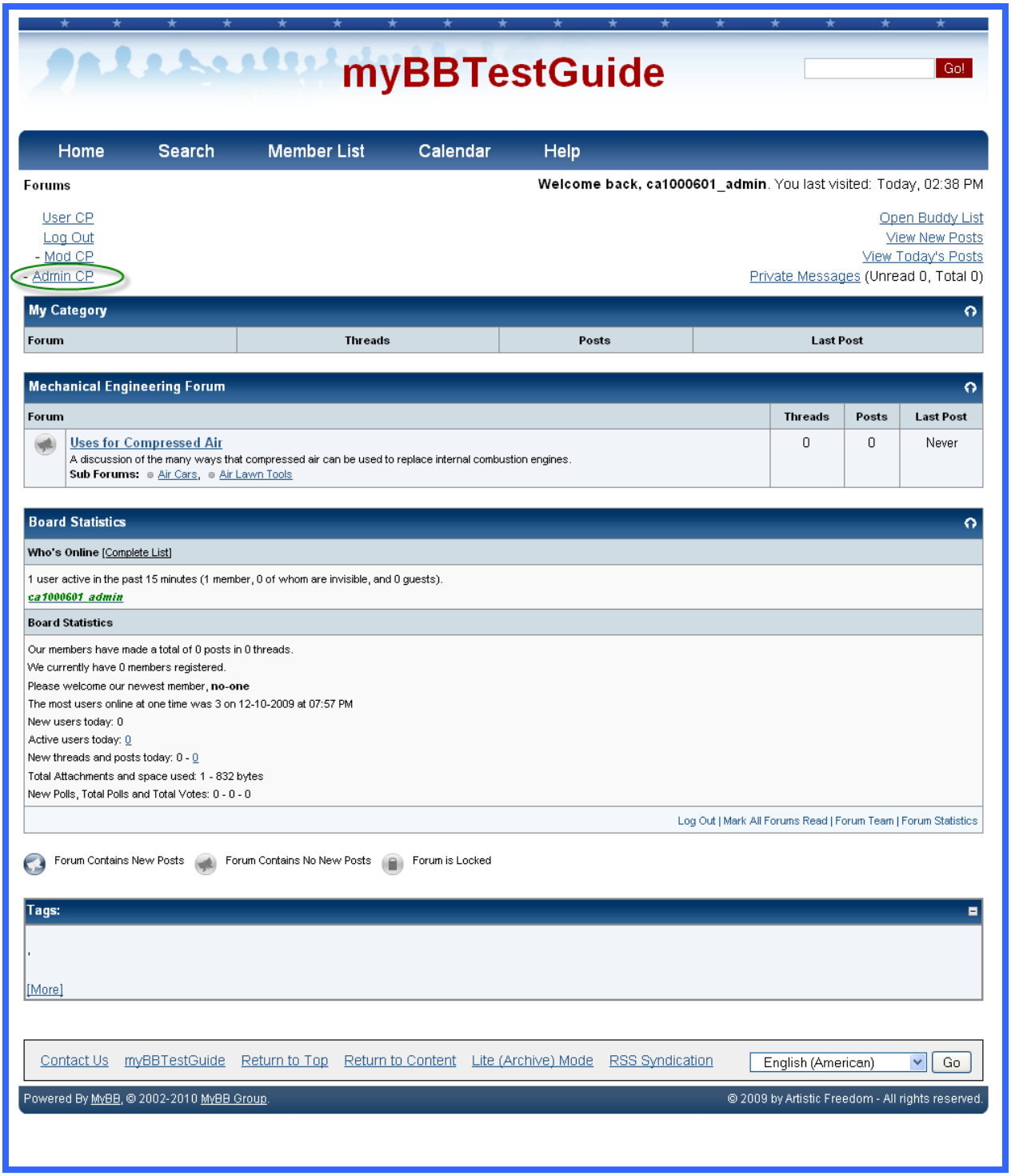
TIP: *Because this document is designed as a quick guide, some specific Administrative functions and settings may not be addressed. Please contact the CEP Team with any questions.*

Important Information

Certain features of your CEP-provisioned forum are either pre-set or require that modifications be made by the CEP Team. Therefore:

- Your URL will look like this: https://forum.citizen.apps.gov./yourforumname/
  Once it is provisioned, you may not change the URL. It is set up by the CEP team.
- Please do not attempt to customize the theme, as styles and themes are set at the host level. To force users to use the myBB default theme, access the **Themes** link on the **Home** page under the **Quick Access** section, click the **Options** button right beside the default theme and force users to use this theme. Do not allow users to assign their own style in the User Control Panel.
- You may not install any upgrades. This must be done at the host level.
- MODS have been added to our version of the myBB forum.
  TIP: *Please suggest new, interesting MODS at our Release Blog.*
- If you have a technical or functional question regarding this forum product or have a suggestion to make, use our Online Help Forum.
  TIP: *Submit your question at Forum Help.*

Getting Started

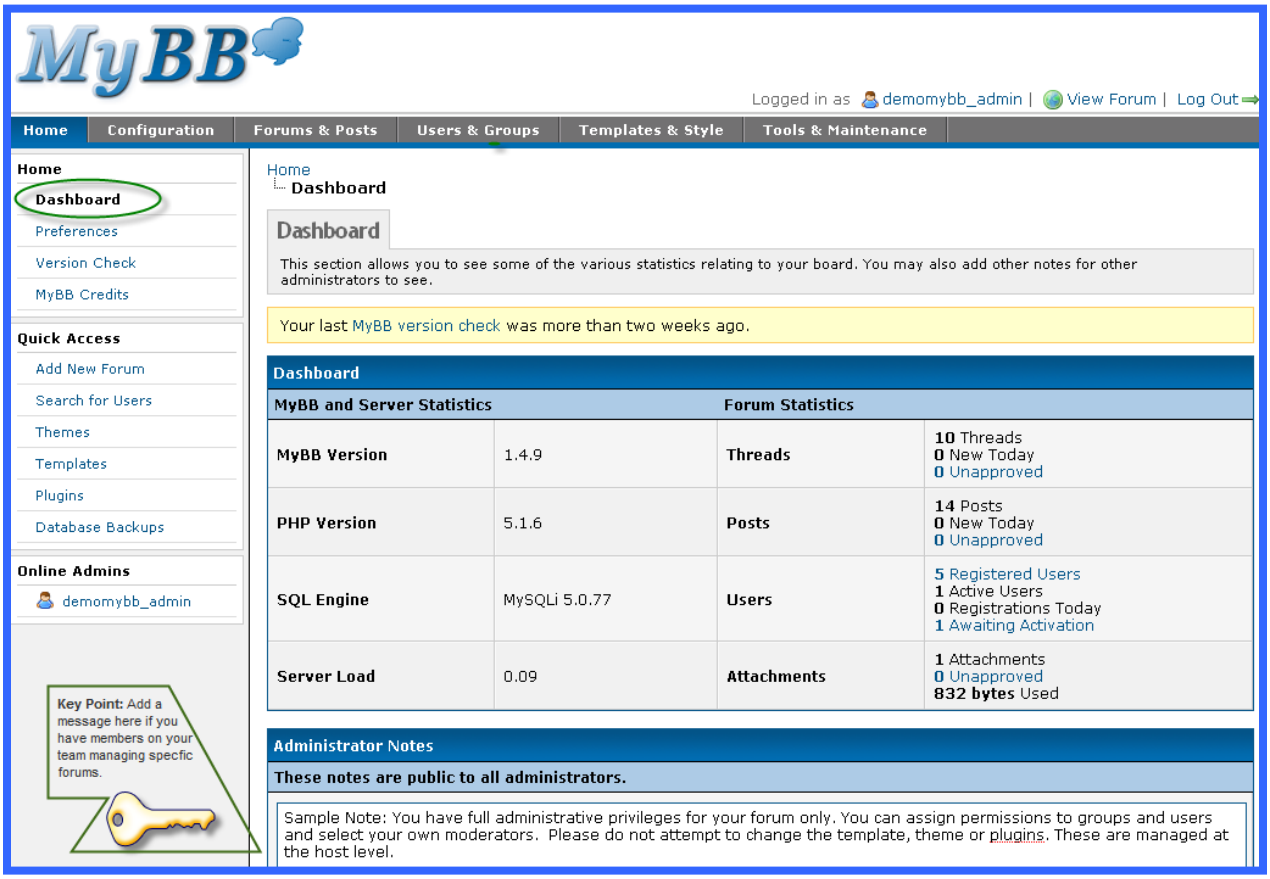


When you first visit your myBB site, **login** with the administrator username and password that were set during the provisioning process. After successful authentication, the **Forum Board index** screen will appear. Once you create forums they will be listed here, along with some statistics about your board.

> ***TIP:*** *The provisioned administrator username cannot be changed, but you can change your password in the* ***User control panel*** *(UserCP) at the top left of the* ***Board Index*** *screen.*

Next, access the **Admin CP (Control Panel)** by clicking its link, at the top left of the page.

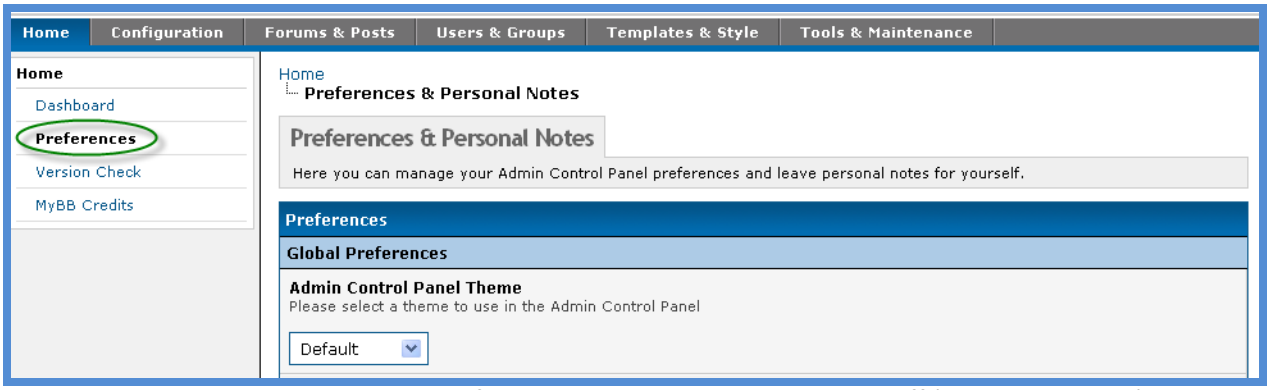
Dashboard



The **Dashboard** will appear. It presents some basic server statistics and information about your board, and a menu that provides quick access to some frequently-used administration pages (e.g. Add New Forum, Search for Users, etc.). On the left side of the panel are links that allow you to control the settings for your site. You can modify or turn off almost all features.

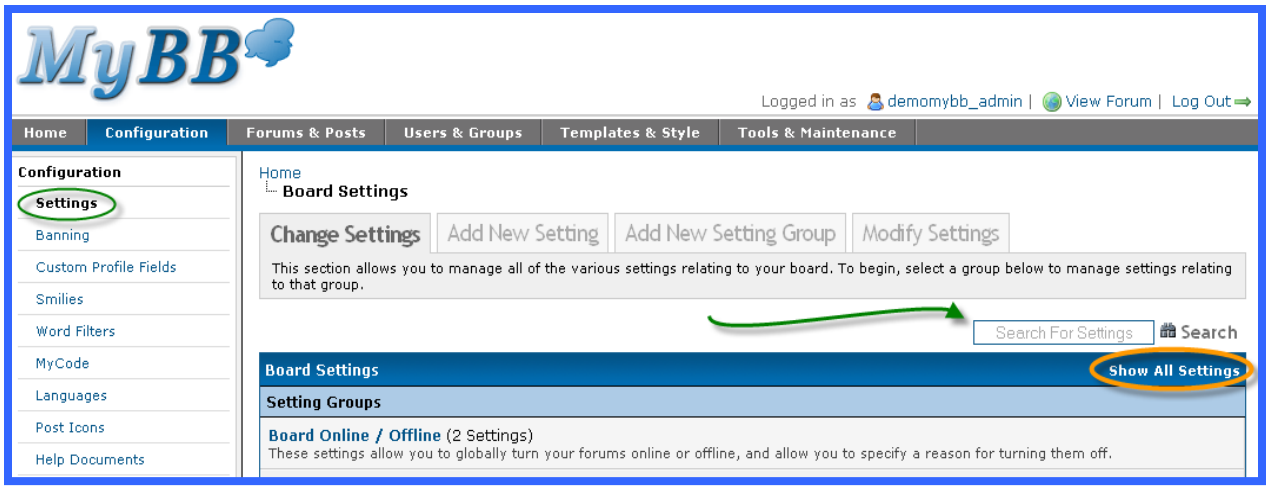
> ***Tip:*** *Remember, do not install any upgrades to MyBB. This must be handled by the CEP Technical team at the host level.*

Administration functions are grouped into six different categories: **Home, Configuration, Forums and Posts, Users and Groups, Templates and Styles, and Tools and Maintenance**--all on tabs located at the top of the page. The left-hand sidebar menus change from page to page. These tools define the way your forum operates. Under the **Home** tab, access **Preferences** at the top left to begin applying your settings.

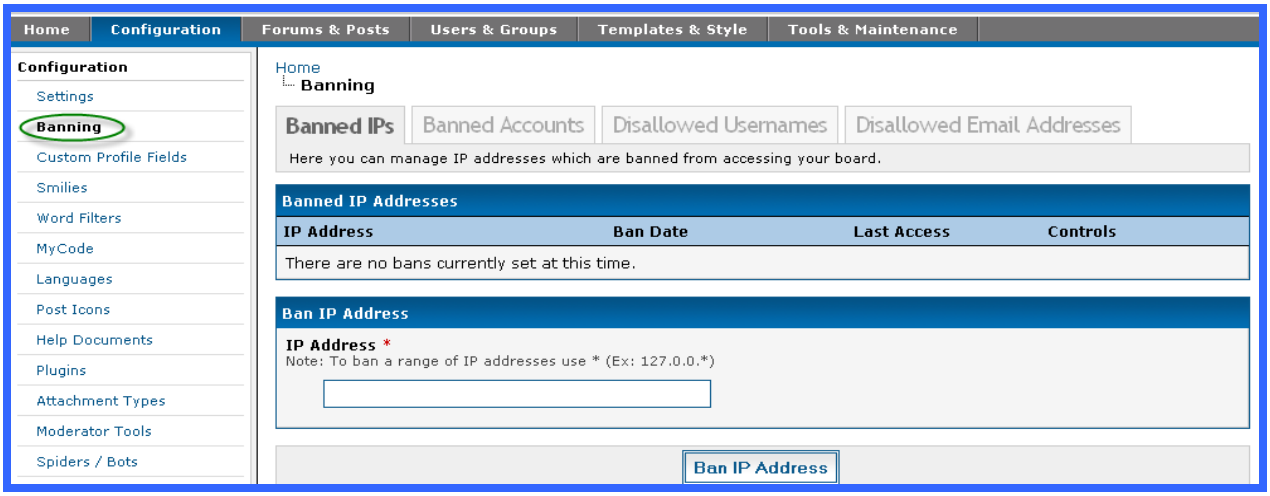


Make sure your ACP theme is set to default, and that CodePress is turned off (click the Yes box). Personal notes or preferences can be added to keep yourself organized. Then click **Save Personal Notes & Preferences** at the bottom of the page.

Configuration



Under the **Configuration** tab, the **Board Settings** panel allows you to set all the basic information for your site and add or modify your own group and individual settings by using the tabs shown in this window. You can search for **Setting Groups** or view all the settings by clicking on **Show All Settings** at the top right of the table. The individual settings for <u>every</u> group are displayed on a scrolling screen. You can view, change, and save all the individual settings (e.g., Board Name, Homepage Name, etc.) for the setting group called *General Configuration* or any other pre-defined group that appears in this view.



Banning

The **Banning** page, found under the **Configuration** tab, offers the ability to ban IP addresses, accounts, and disallow usernames and email addresses. Wildcard support is included for IP addresses, usernames, and email addresses. These functions can also be performed by accessing the **Banning** link under the **Users and Groups** tab

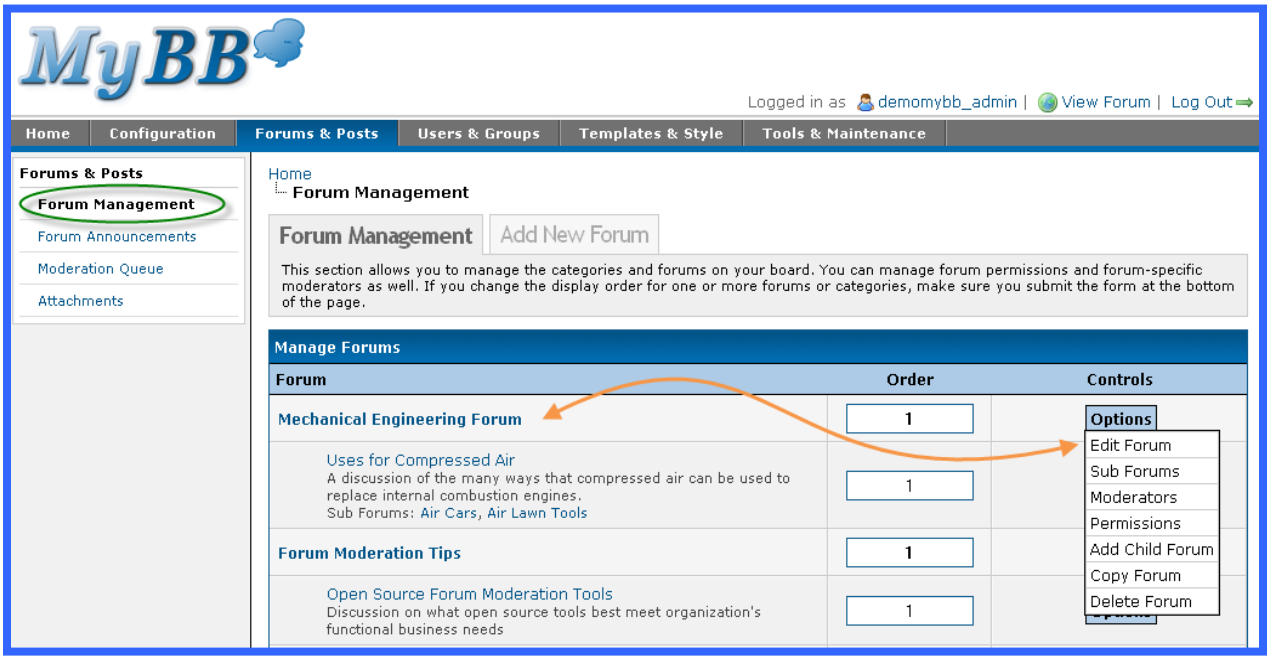
To ban an IP address, enter the address, or a range of addresses (using an asterisk [*] to represent a wildcard), into the IP Address field and select **Ban IP Address**. To ban specific accounts, select the **Banned Accounts** tab, enter the username, ban reason, and ban length and then select **Ban User**. To disallow specific usernames, select the third tab on the Banning page, fill in the desired username to be banned and select **Disallow Username**. To block email addresses, select the fourth tab called **Disallowed Email Addresses** and enter the email address.

Finally, go back and access the **Settings** link under the **Configuration** tab, find the **Registration and Profile Options** setting group and make sure the **Users Keep Email** radio button is set to “No.”

> ***Tip:*** *If a current user has an email already registered in your banned list, this will prevent them from using that address.*

Forums and Posts

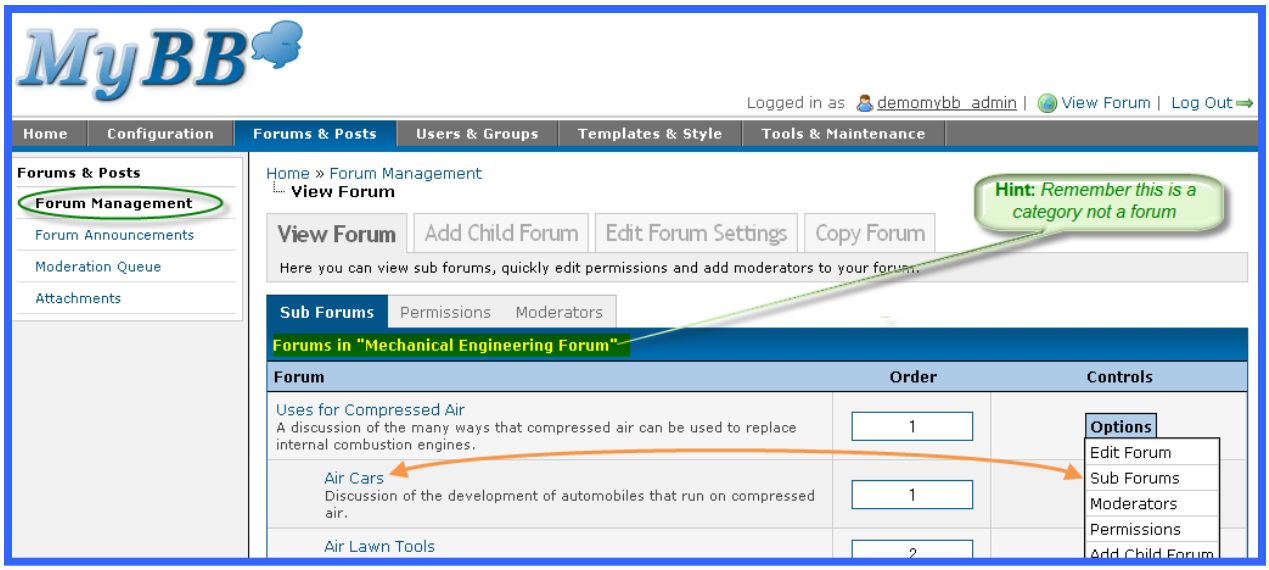
The **Forums & Posts tab** offers tools for to forum and post management. This includes managing and creating forums, assigning permissions, searching for attachments and moderating the thread & post queues.



Forum Management

On the **Forum Management** page, you can view a 3-tiered listing of your forums: the primary categories, the forums within those categories, and sub-forums (also called child forums) within forums. If you click the **Options** drop-down button you can manage your forum permissions and forum-specific moderators. By entering a number (e.g., one having the highest priority) in the **Order** column you can rank how your forums and sub-forums will be displayed in the Board Index.

To see anything deeper, you need to click on the name of a Category (e.g. Mechanical Engineering Forum) to view all the forums and sub-forums that fall under it. On the **View Forum** page, for example, **Uses for Compressed Air** is the main forum and **Air Cars** and **Air Lawn Tools** are the sub-forums.

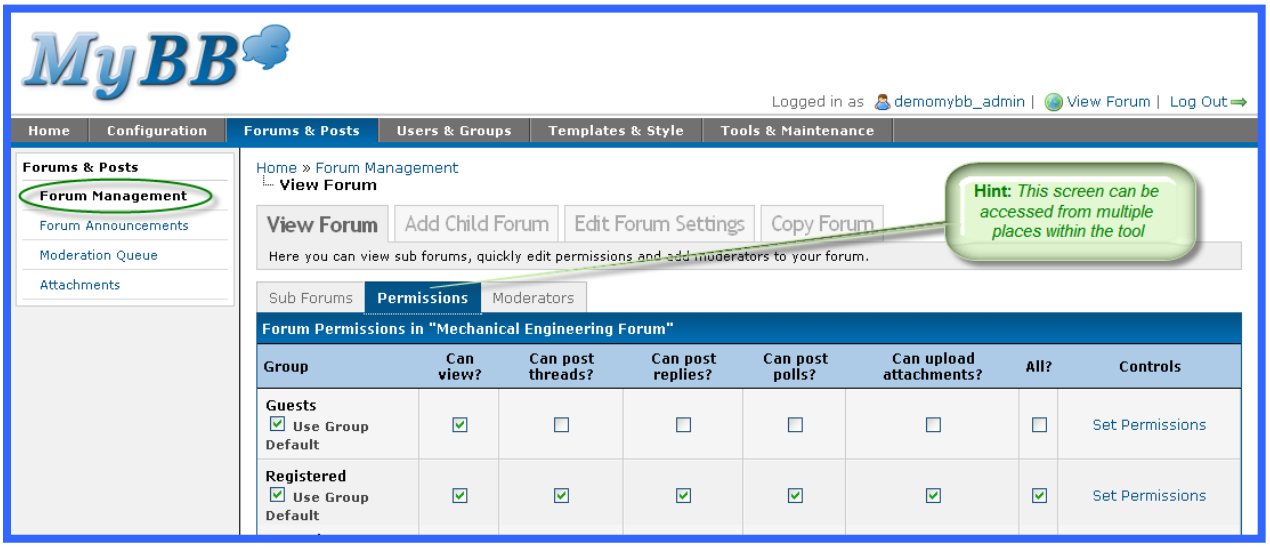


Selecting one of the sub-forums (e.g. Air Cars), will show a second **Sub Forums** page that only shows the child forums. Again, you can arrange the order of the list by entering a number in the **Order** column.

From this page you can also create a new child forum. When adding a child forum you need to select the **Add a Child Forum** tab and enter the same data as when creating a new forum.

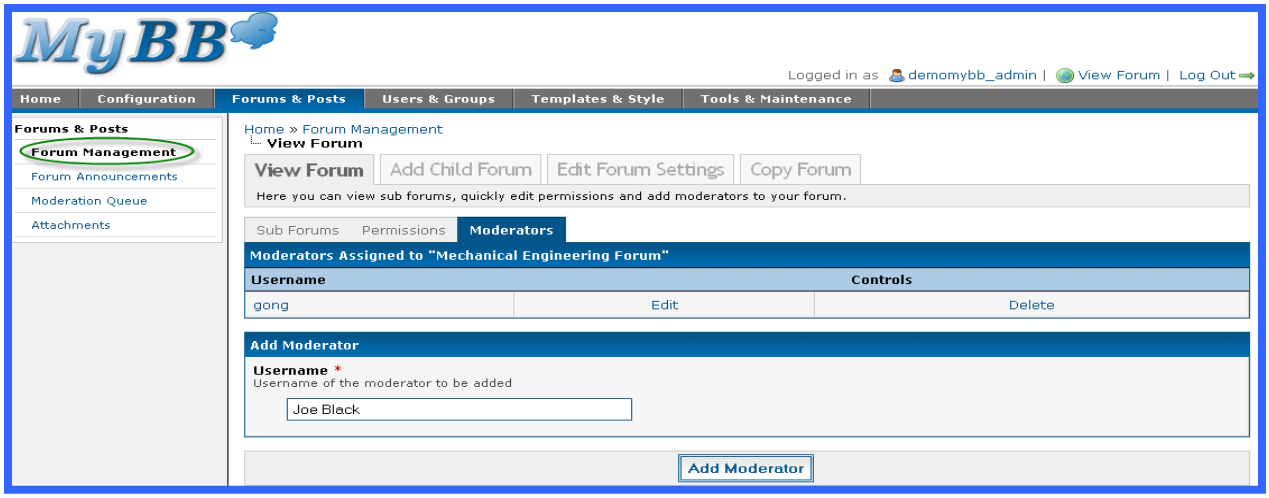
> ***Tip:*** *Do not let the terminology confuse you. There is really no difference between Child Forums and Sub Forums.*

The **View Forum** page (and also **Add New Forum**) provides access to all permissions and settings for a particular forum or sub forum. From here, you can edit or modify the forum settings, add a child forum, or copy the forum settings and/or permissions to another forum, or a new one, through the **Options** drop-down menu just as you can when adding a new forum (see *Add a New Category or Forum*, page 8).



Permissions (Pre-defined Groups)

Next, you can set permissions for all pre-defined groups at the category, forum or sub-forum level. The same process applies to each level. When performing this task, several other pre-defined groups (i.e. Administrators, Super Moderators, Moderators, etc.) will appear as well.



Add a Moderator

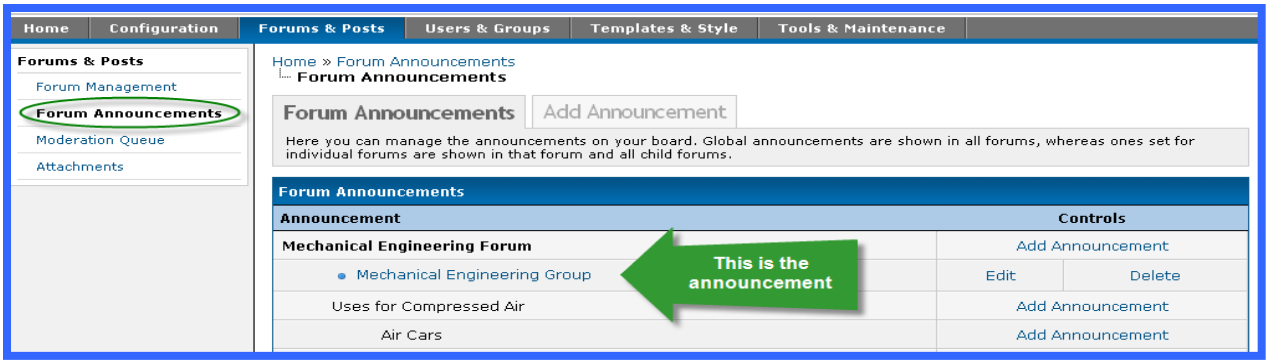
The last thing you can do within this view is add a new Moderator to your forum or sub-forum.

Moderators are users who have been given special permissions. They can have the authority to edit or delete posts and lock, unlock, move, delete and split topics in the forum they moderate. Generally, moderators are present to prevent users from going off-topic or posting abusive or offensive material. Just add the Username and click **Add Moderator** at the bottom of the screen. After moderators are assigned to your forums or sub forums, their names will appear in the **Moderators Assigned to Forum** (e.g. Mechanical Engineering Forum) frame.

Editing a Moderator's Permissions

After you have assigned moderators to specific forums, you will see a listing of all moderators in the middle of the screen, and an edit link will appear under the controls column. You will be able to edit the moderator's permissions directly from this view. (See *Managing Groups*, page 10, for more details.)

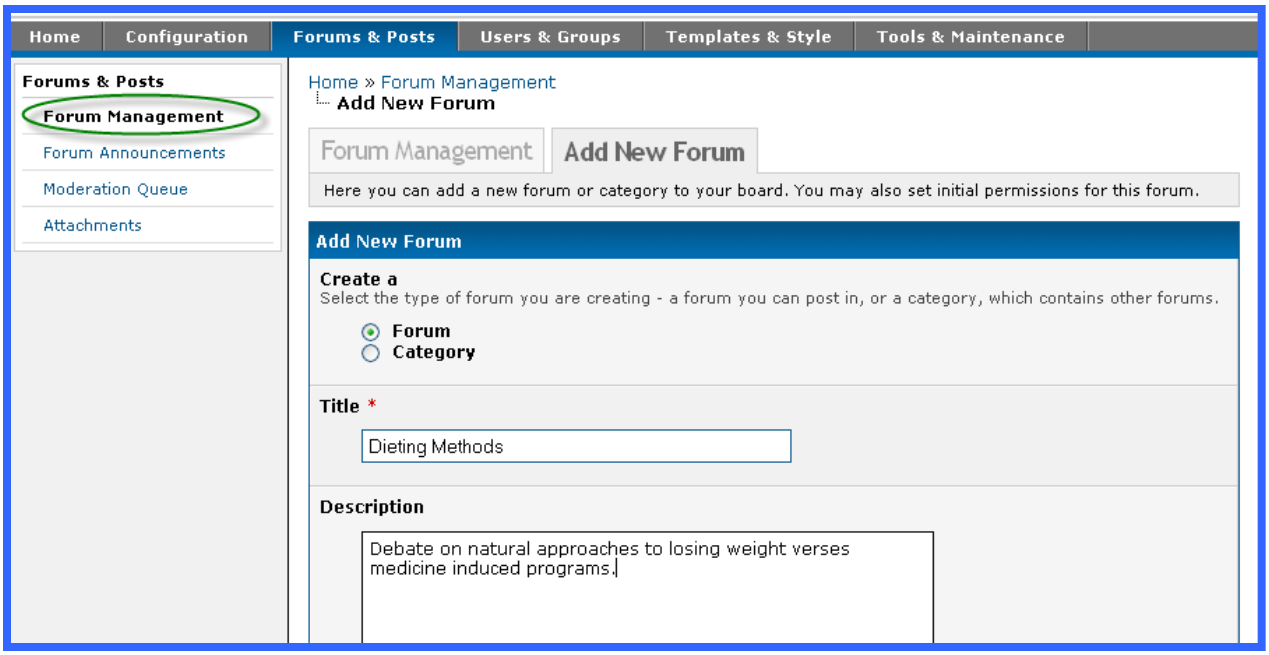
When you add the moderator the default permissions will be applied. If you want to edit the permissions click the **Edit** link under the controls column (see screen above), and you will be taken to the necessary page.



Add an Announcement

In the **Forums and Posts** tab, you can add announcements by accessing the **Forum Announcement** link and selecting the **Add an Announcement** tab.

For each forum, you can choose to add a new announcement. Beneath each forum is a listing of its forum announcements, with an indicator showing if it is within its date limits. If it is not within its date limits, it will not be shown. You can edit or delete each announcement. You can add or edit an announcement by selecting **Add Announcement** at the top of the listing page, or by selecting **Add Announcement** for a specific forum. Any global announcements will appear as a list.

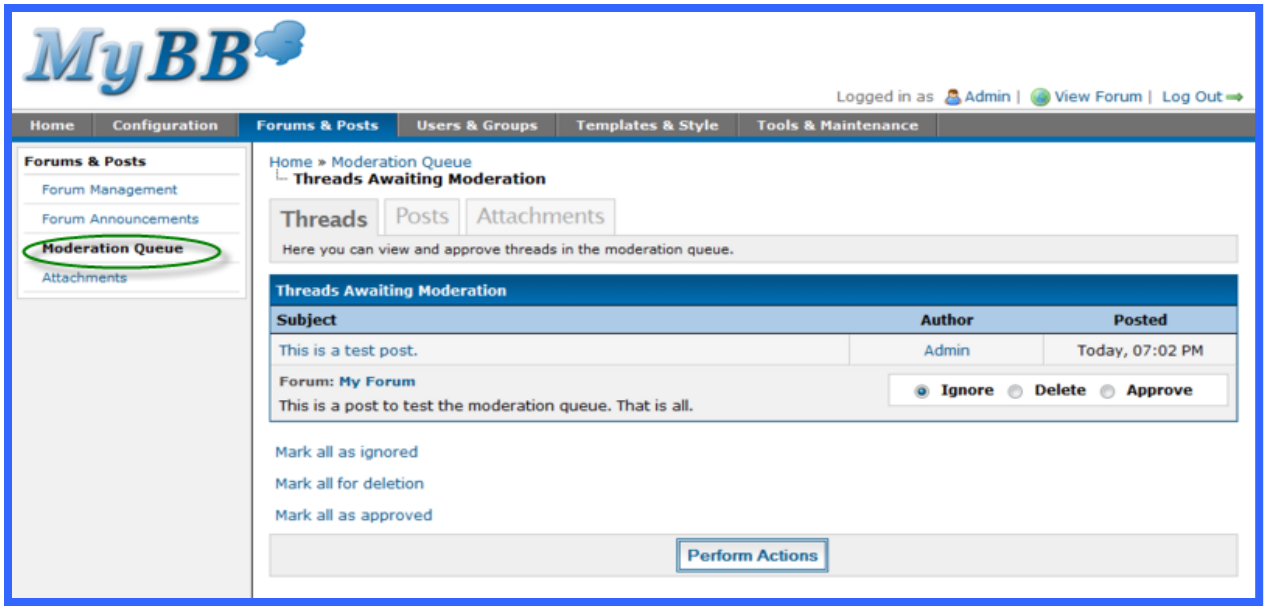


Add a New Category or Forum

To add a new category or forum, select the **Add New Forum** tab and the following screen appears.

Select the type of forum you are creating, a **Forum** you can post in, or a **Category,** which contains other forums. Type the category or forum name (e.g., Mechanical Engineering Forum) in the title textbox, include a brief description, and select a Parent Forum (when creating a forum or sub forum) and then click the **Save Forum** button. You can also select what order you want this to be displayed on the board index. Then at the bottom of this page, you can set the permissions as documented previously.

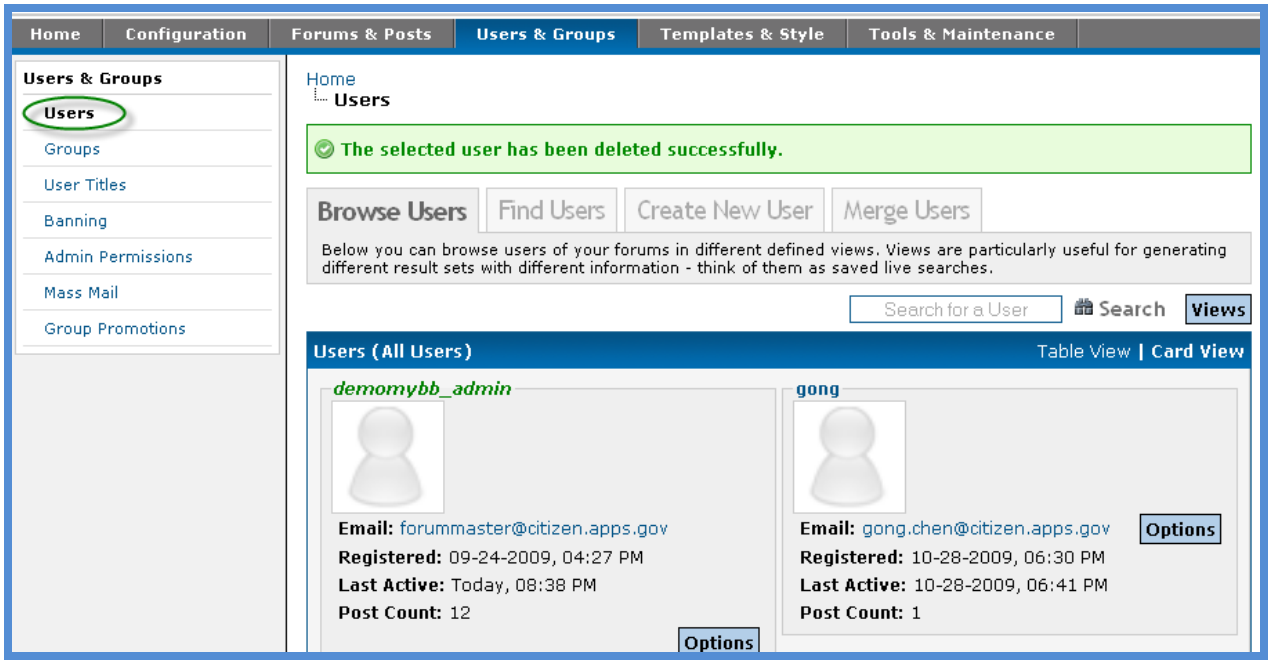
Moderation Queues and Threading



The **Moderation Queue** provides a view of all threads, posts, and attachments on your forum that have not yet been approved. From here, you can approve, choose to ignore, or delete any unapproved item.

The bottom of the listing offers a batch option: you can choose to mark all to be approved, mark all to be deleted, or mark all to be ignored.

Managing Users



Browse Users

Views allow you to browse and find multiple users based on preset administrator-specified search fields.

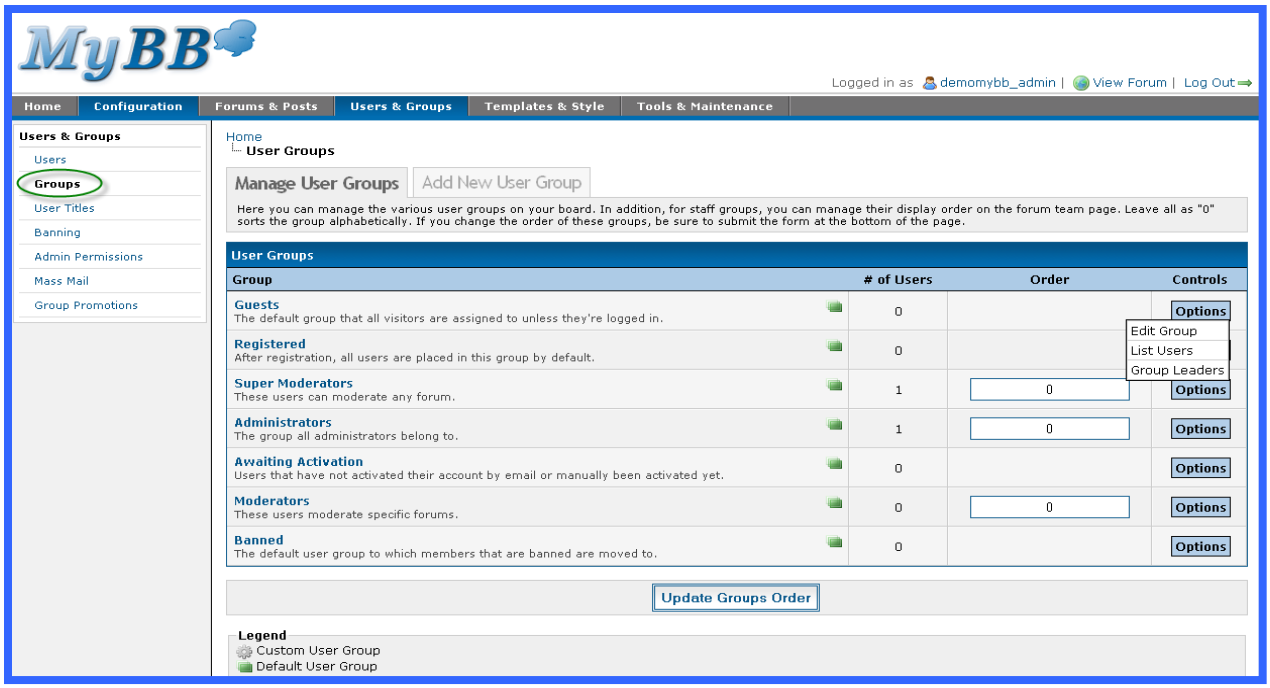
All Users is the default view. Access a view by selecting it from the **Views** drop down menu at the top of the **Browse Users** table. The view you are currently using will be displayed in the Browse Users table title, in parentheses. You can edit views by selecting **Manage Views** under the drop down menu at the top. You can also enter specific search fields for individual users at the **Find User** screen.

Editing a User's Profile and Settings

When editing a user, all information and controls are divided among five tabs: Overview, Profile, Account Settings, Signature, and Avatar.

To save any changes, click on **Save User** at the bottom of each tab.

> ***Tip:*** *You do not have to save until you are finished making setting changes. Saving in any tab will save everything changed from any other tabs.*

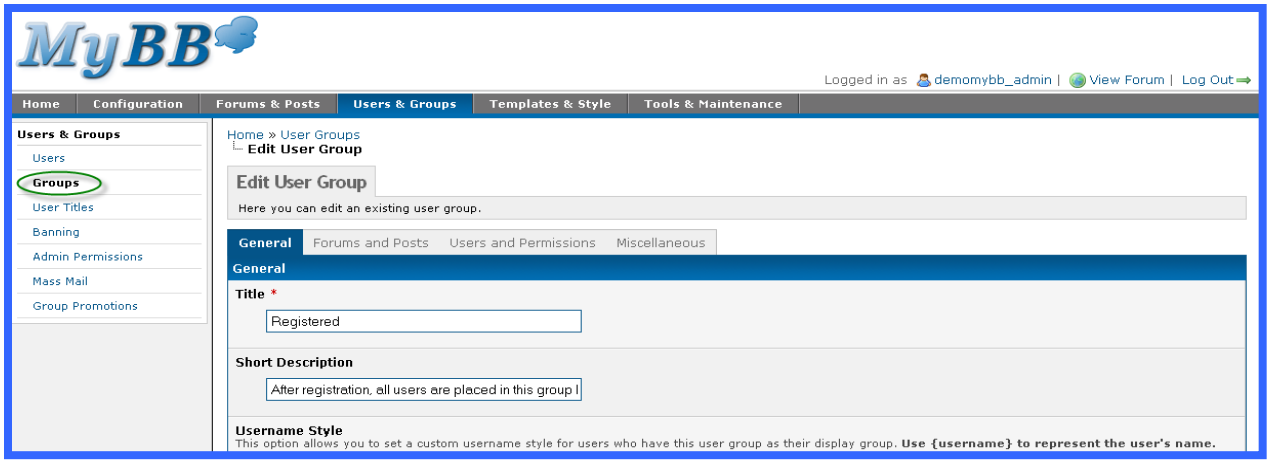


Managing Groups

User groups categorize users, providing access levels and permissions for forums and forum features. In the **User Groups** page of the Admin CP you will see a listing of all users in each group and can manage the user groups on your forum.

Management options include:

- Change or Edit User Group listing;
- List Users
- Assign Group Leaders



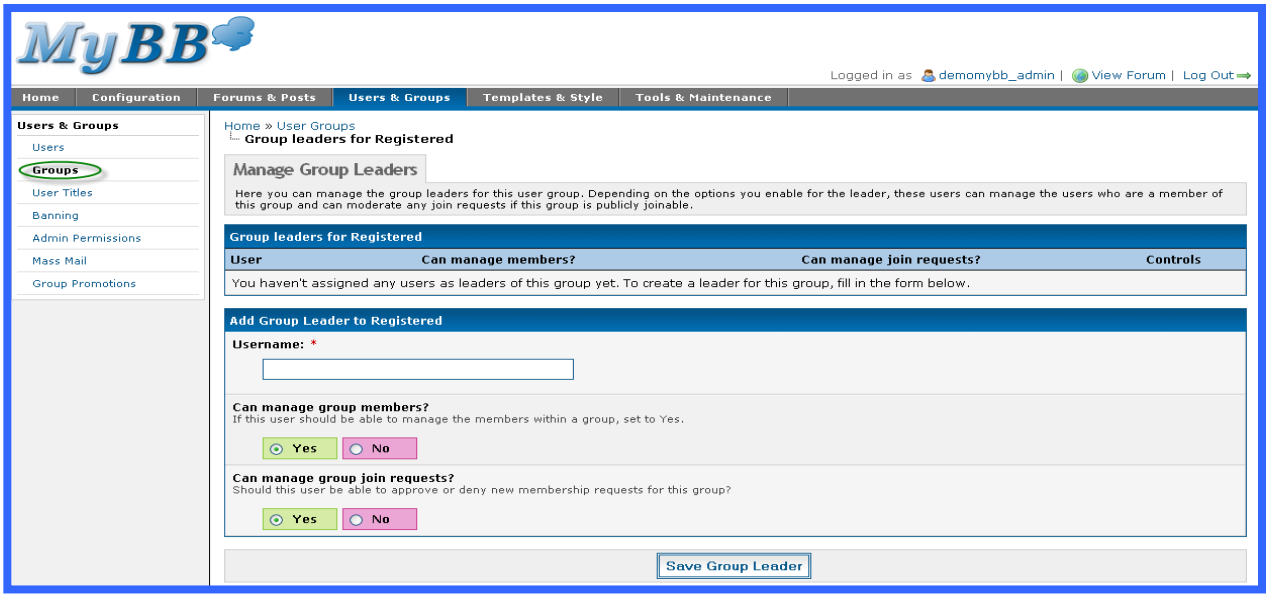
Editing User Group

The **Edit User Group** page is divided into four tabs: General, Forums and Posts, Users and Permissions, and Miscellaneous.

- General: The general tab deals with the basic settings for a group, and generic permissions.
- Forums and Posts: This tab includes permissions relating to the viewing and posting of replies and threads.
- Users and Permissions: Includes Account Management, Reputation System, and Private Messaging.
- Miscellaneous: The miscellaneous tab contains settings that do not fit into other tabs, such as Calendar, Who's Online, etc.

List Users Associated with Group

In the Manage Group view, you can click the List Users link in the dropdown menu under **Options** (e.g. Administrators) to see what users are assigned to a specific group. A window will appear showing all the users in this group.



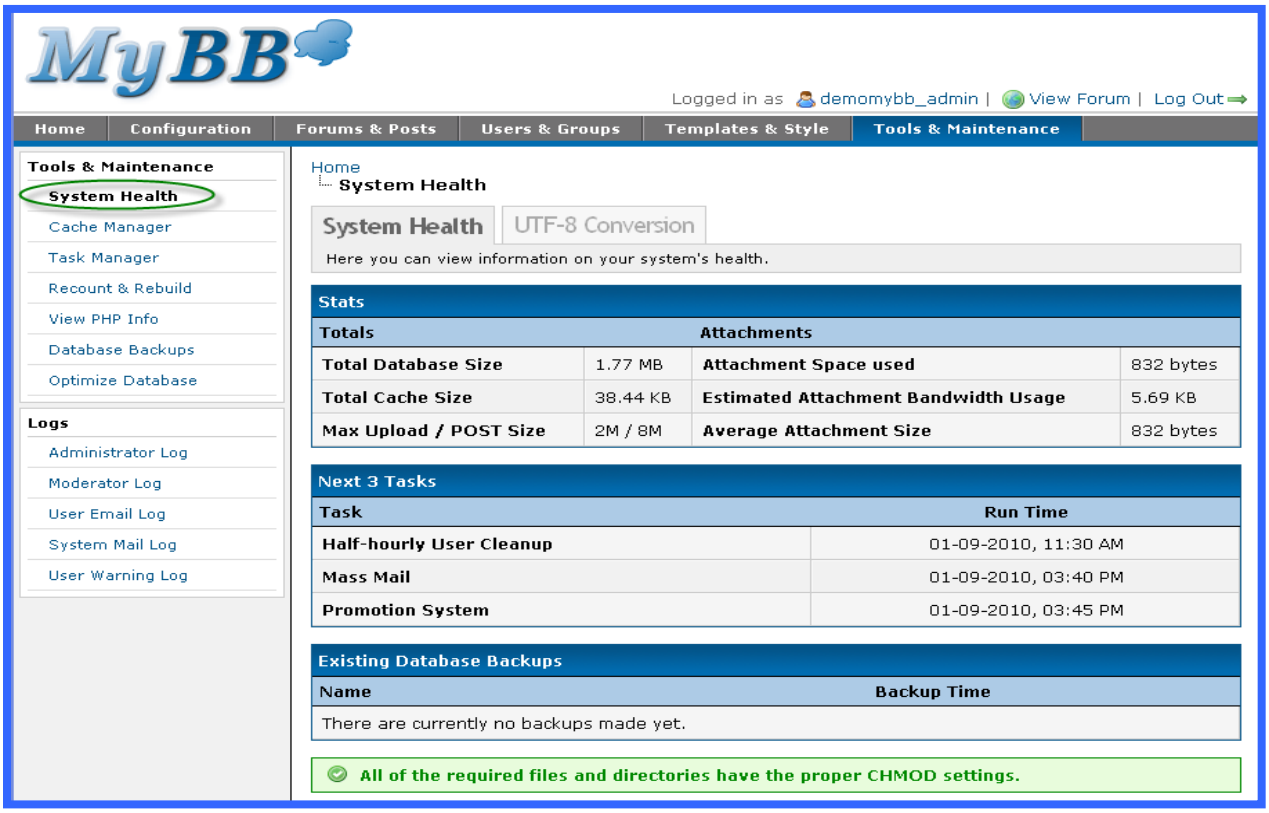
Assigning Group Leaders

You can add a group leader at the bottom of the group leader's page, or edit a group leader by clicking on Edit next to the user.

Tools and Maintenance

Two maintenance tools are addressed in this guide that should be helpful to System Administrators:

- System Health; and
- Task Manager.



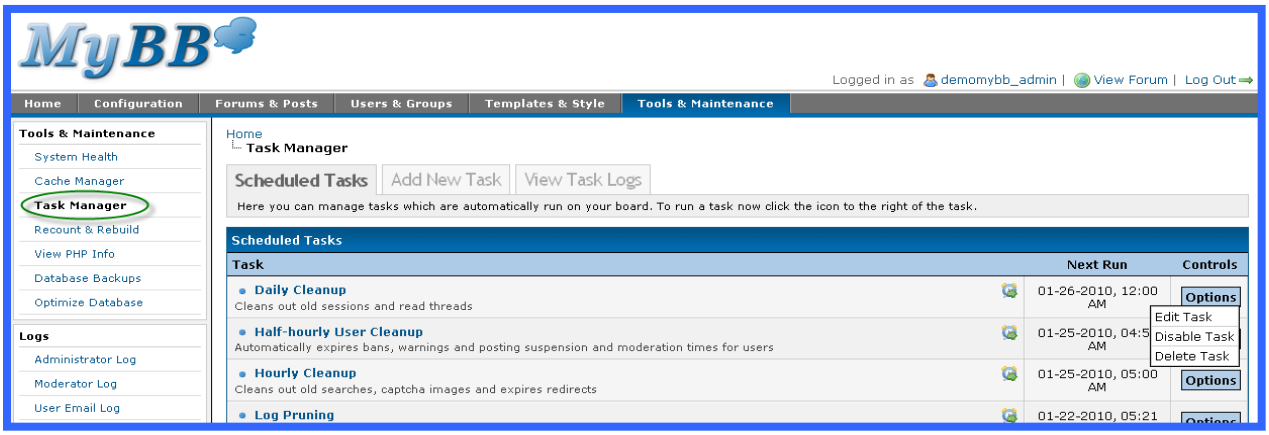
System Health

The System Health page allows you to view the more technical statistics regarding your board, such as:

- *Total Database Size* - The total size of your MySQL, PostgreSQL, or SQLite database.
- *Total Cache Size* - The total size of your board's cache.
- *Max Upload / POST Size* - The first value is the maximum size that your server allows for files that will be uploaded to be. The second value is the maximum size that your server allows POST queries to be.
- *Attachment Space Used* - The amount of space used for attachments on your board.
- *Estimated Attachment Bandwidth Usage* - The estimated amount of bandwidth used overall by users downloading attachments.
- *Average Attachment Size* - The attachment space used divided by the number of attachments, thus representing the "average" attachment size.

You also have access to the UTF-8 converter, which can convert existing database tables from another encoding to UTF-8.

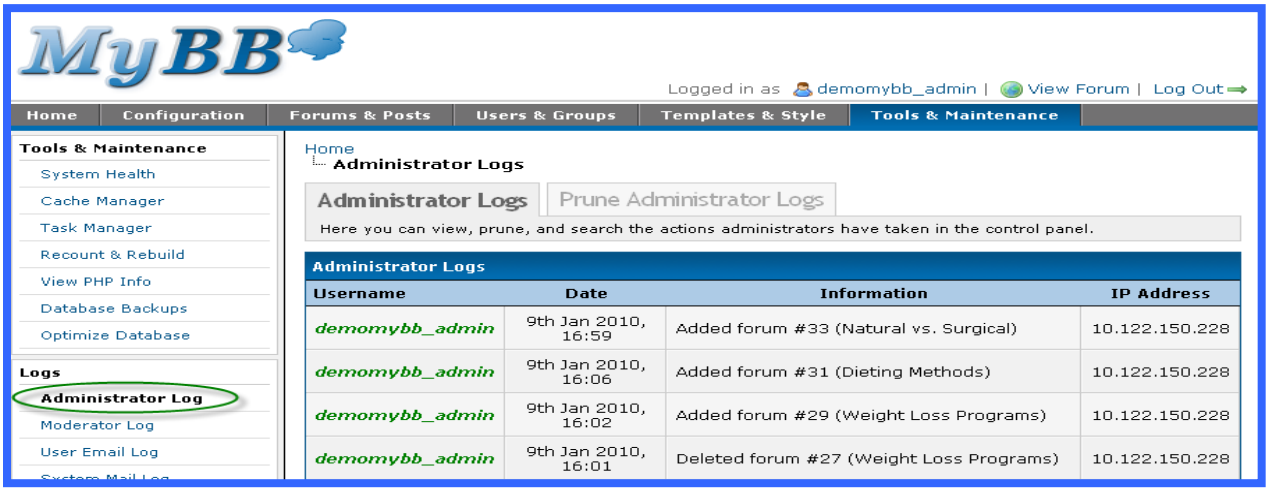
TIP: *We recommend having the CEP Technical Team handle the UTF-8 conversion function.*



Task Manager

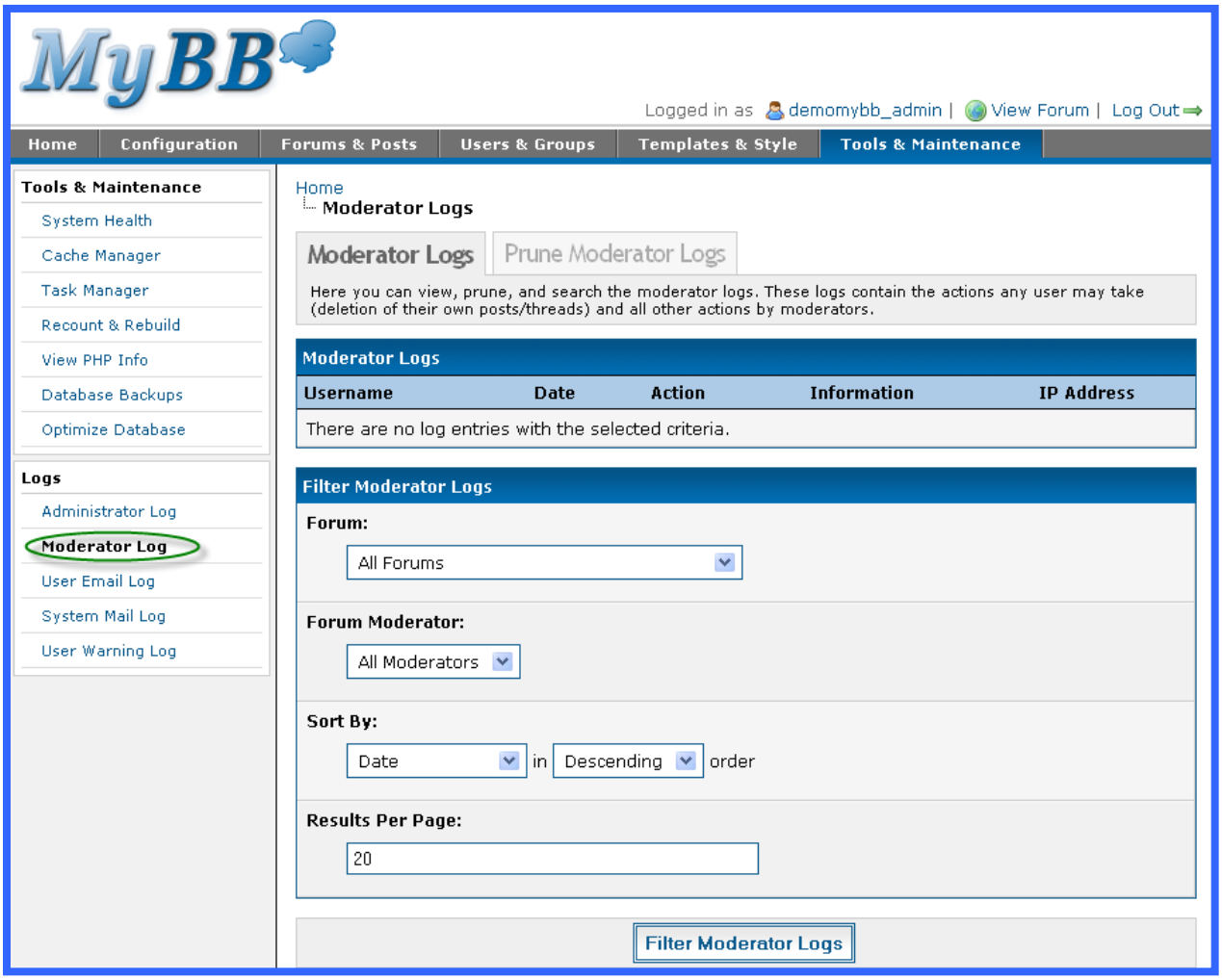
The task manager function allows you to manage the scheduled tasks that are run on your forum. Scheduled tasks can be run at the specified time(s), on the specified day(s), in the specified month(s).

The task listing page displays the name of the task, its description, the time of the next run, and whether or not it is enabled. From the task listing page, you can choose to add or edit a task, enable/disable the task, delete the task, or run the task.



Administrator Logs

The **Administrator Log** tab provides access to detailed statistics and information about your site, as well as various site management tools. Routine maintenance tasks can be scripted, and you can see various action logs.



Moderator Logs

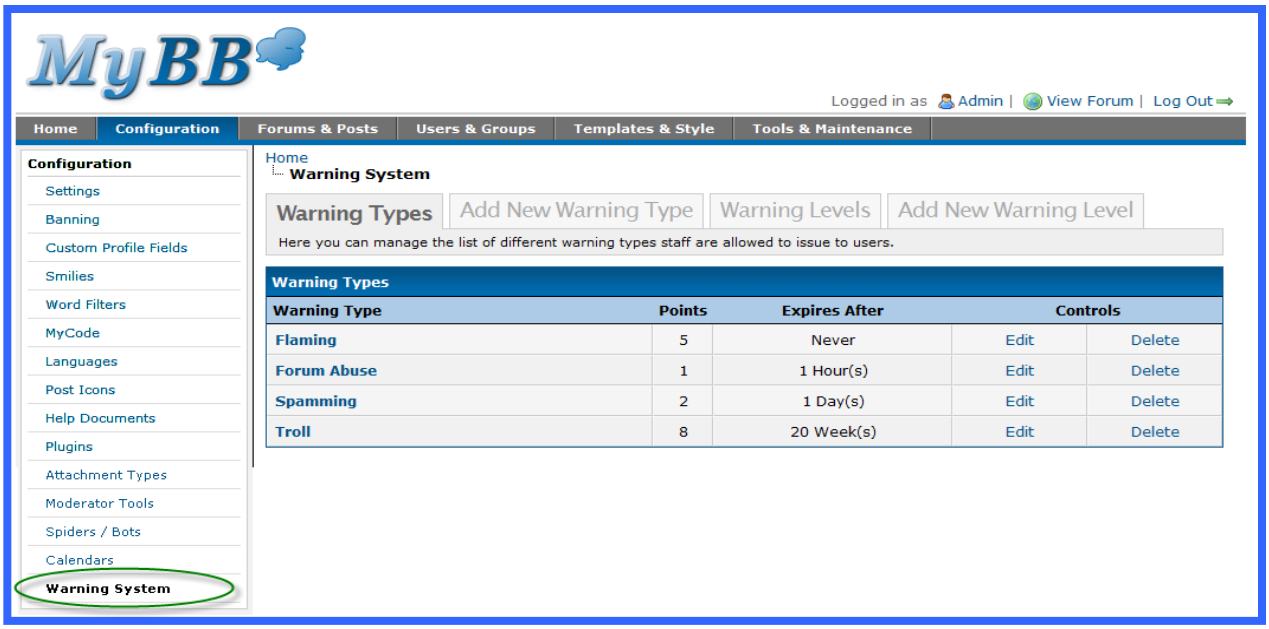
Under the Moderator Logs tab, you can view, filter, prune and search all the moderator logs.

> ***Tip:*** *Moderator logs are automatically pruned by default. If you want this function disabled, contact the CEP Technical Team.*

It lists all moderator actions that have been performed on your forum site, including those made by normal users, such as deleting their own post or thread. For each action, you will see the -

- Username,
- Date and time the action was performed,
- Action, relevant information (including the thread and forum), and
- IP address.

If the action performed was using a custom moderator tool, the action will include the name of the custom moderator tool.



Warning System

In the **Warning System tab,** you can give warnings to your users. There are two items that you can configure for the warning system; warning types and warning levels. You can easily warn registered users and guests for various offenses, and establish automatic punishments to be given based on the warning level.

There are various board settings regarding the warning system. If enabled in the board settings in the Admin CP, a user will be able to see their warning level in their profile and will be able to view their recent warnings from their User Control Panel.

Warning Types

Warning Types are the warnings that can be issued when warning a user. For each warning type, you can configure the name, points to add, and the time of expiry. Staff can also issue custom warnings, setting these options at the time of warning.

Warning Levels

Warning Levels are preset actions to occur when a user reaches a certain warning percentage. For any warning level, you can ban the user, suspend their posting privileges, or moderate all new posts for an amount of time you choose.

My Dashboard

The *My Dashboard* tab will only appear on the Storefront after a product has been provisioned through APPS.gov Now at https://citizen.apps.gov/index.php.

This Storefront tab allows a system administrator access to a summary of provisioned products. From here you can view a variety of statistics and application metric graphs by clicking the "Go To My Metrics" link at the right of each listed product (see below).

NOTE: *These graphs may change in upcoming 2010 releases.*

Appendix A: Useful Links

http://wiki.mybboard.net/index.php/Documentation

Appendix B: SEO

What is Search Engine Optimization?

In a nutshell, Search Engine Optimization is the process of making a web site search engine-friendly through HTML manipulation, so that search engine spiders can crawl every page of the site and return the web site to its index. With that being said, there are actually many more variables involved in getting high rankings. In fact, high-quality search engine optimization is based on page coding and off-site marketing in the form of links.

Getting into the Search Engine

There are two basic ways for your site to be added to a search engine, depending on which engine is targeted. One is to submit your site to the search engine. With some engines, such as Google, the submission is free, but sometimes this method requires a submission fee for each page. The second option is more natural, and consists of getting your site linked to from other reputable sites on the web. This allows the spiders to use those sites to find yours.

Getting rankings

Once your site has been added to the search engine's index, you can begin optimizing (optimizing before submission would be even better). The most basic optimization consists of concentrating on your Meta Tags, Title Tag, content and links. The Meta Tags tell the spiders what your site is all about. Many Meta Tags can hold a variety of very specific information, from the site author name to what language the site is in, or whether or not the spider should follow the links on the page. The content on your web site should be original and thorough. Try to have at least 300-500 words on your web page and make sure you target your core keywords repeatedly. You should also get your site linked with as many sites as you can. This will build your popularity on the web and, in the eyes of engines such as Google, the more relevant you are to the rest of the web the more important you are to their index. In short, the higher your site will be ranked.

There are no magic solutions to search engine rankings. Many things can help your placement, but, in the end, good lasting rankings will come from a lot of hard work.

Optimizing the Title Tag for Search Engine Optimization

What is a Title Tag?

A Title Tag is a piece of HTML code that describes specific web page content through a keyword query that a person types into a search engine. Title Tags are a very important guide for all search engines in determining what is in the content of a web page. Creating a relevant Title Tag is one of the most important variables in achieving high search engine positioning.

View your Title Tag

You can view the Title Tag in the source code of a web page or at the top of your browser window. If you are interested in viewing the Title Tag through the source code simply click on *view* from the menu at the top of your browser then click on *source* and open the window for full view. You will find the Title Tag in the head section of the source code along with your Meta description tag and Meta keyword tag.

What should your Title Tag contain?

Consider your Title Tag as a representation of your core keywords--the most important services and offerings. Make sure that core keywords relating to the product or service you are providing stand out in the title of your index page before anything else. If you are promoting several products and services *always* utilize the Title Tag on each individual URL for its specific keyword(s) and keyword phrases.

You can brand your company's name through keyword density in the Title Tag as well. By including your company name you can establish popularity, branding your company for specific products and services that you offer. With popularity, the name of your company can become a regular search term within the search engines.

How long should your Title Tag be?

It is important to consider the Title Tag's character count. We at Keyword Performance believe that Title Tags should span no less than six words and no more than twelve, resulting in a range of about fifty to eighty characters. This includes spaces, hyphens, commas, etc. This will allow the search engine to utilize this information effectively. Don't overdo the keyword density by cramming in more information than a search engine will scan.

If you offer multiple products or services, don't worry that a search engine will miss something if all the relevant keywords aren't stuffed into one tag. Obviously, you will have other sub-pages built into your site with the specifics, and the search engines will also scan those tags. Each search engine has its own tag-scanning length limitation. For an average person using a search engine, having too many phrases can sometimes confuse the way the search result is displayed. Building a strong Title Tag will increase your visibility on multiple search engines.

Optimizing the Meta Description Tag for Search Engine Optimization

The Meta Description Tag:

The Meta Description Tag is another important and powerful META variable to include when building a strategic Search Engine Optimization strategy. The Meta Description Tag, like the Title Tag, is viewed in a SERP (better known as a Search Engine Results Position) when a person views a search result. The description is another important tag in achieving top search engine placement.

View Your Meta Description Tag:

You can view your Meta Description Tag in the source code by simply going to the menu at the top of your browser and clicking on *view*. Scroll down the options and click on *source,* then open the window for a full view. The Meta Description Tag is in the Head area just like the Title Tag and Meta Keyword Tag.

What should your Meta Description Tag contain?

The description should be written as a powerful on-point marketing statement. Include important keywords that will be found within the content of the webpage. Many people try spamming keywords in this area, mashing words together than don't make a coherent sentence. When building descriptive content, it is important to create a relevant sentence that includes the most important keywords and keyword phrases AND makes sense. Remember, the description is also viewed in the search engine results pages (SERP) and will be seen by the user.

Our opinion at Keyword Performance is that a description should contain twelve to twenty-four words or approximately one-hundred and fifty to one-hundred and eighty characters. Having a giant description really is not going to hurt you, but if a search engine is not going to read past a predetermined character count, it makes no sense to add more.

Optimizing the Meta Keywords Tag for Search Engine Optimization

What is a Meta Keywords Tag?

The Meta Keywords Tag does not weigh as heavily as the Title Tag or Meta Description Tag, but is still relevant within the use of Search Engine Optimization. The Meta Keywords Tag should consist of specific words and/or phrases that relate to your web page topic. These words and phrases are commonly referred to as your "keywords" and "key phrases".

How can I view My Meta Keywords Tag?

You can find the Meta Keywords Tag in the Head section of your code, normally below the Title Tag and Meta Description Tag. You can view your Meta Keywords Tag in the source code by going to the menu at the top of your browser and clicking on *view*. Scroll down your options and click on *source,* then open the window for a full view. The Meta Keywords Tag is in the Head area just like the Title Tag and Meta Description Tag.

How should I place my Meta Keywords Tag?

Within this Meta Tag, list all your keywords and key phrases separated by commas with no spaces. The keywords should list in order of importance (i.e. topics on your page, and then keyword frequency. Remember to include any variations of a keyword, singular and plural versions, and synonyms (different words that mean the same thing). You should not repeat a keyword more than 3 to 4 times within this tag, including variations. Over-use of this tag is frowned upon by search engines and considered spam.

Misconceptions

Long ago, the Meta Keywords Tag, a staple for many search engines, was a major factor in extracting relevant search terms from websites. As the internet built popularity over the 1990's, people realized that they could manipulate search engine technology to generate spam, and get results for terms that were not relevant to a particular type of product, service, information, etc . Those days are long gone.

We still see the overuse of keywords in this tag, and we still see people that think that adding keywords repeatedly, or capitalizing some of them, will make a big difference. FORGET IT! It doesn't work. We aren't saying that the Meta Keywords Tag can't be used for optimizing a website, just that it doesn't weigh as heavily as it once did.

Reciprocal Linking

Many people today are still using programs like Zeus to build large quantities of reciprocal links to their websites. In most cases, these programs don't really help the process of building a great reciprocal link campaign. The use of these programs usually results in link farming, which refers to a massive reciprocal linking of websites that really don't pertain to any industry and/or are not related to each other. A good reciprocal link could be described as two sites with related topics and links to each other. Quality search engines like Google are adding filters to their algorithms to combat spammers that clog search results with irrelevant information and link farms.

Finding good link partners

With billions of websites making up the World-wide Web, your first question is probably going to be "Where do I start?" (Good question!). If you asked yourself this question before you read it, then you most likely already understand that there are sites you should link to and sites you shouldn't. Your search for good link partners should start with educating yourself on the who's who of your industry on the web. Use a few search engines to find other websites related to your industry. Run some searches using your researched keywords and click through some of the sites that appear in the results. Next, critique the sites you view. Are they well written? Is there an abundance of good content? Is this a site that you would want to suggest to someone in a conversation? Are they a reputable business? Lastly, scan around their site for a links page. Do they offer reciprocal links? Sometimes you will find forms to fill out to submit your site. These forms get submitted to the webmasters and a review of your site will take place. Upon review, the Webmaster will either accept or decline your link to their page. If there is no form for links, look for an email address to contact the Webmaster directly.

Receiving Reciprocal Links

Now that you know how to find good links, where do you put the reciprocal links on of your site for your link partners? As you would assume, create a links page. This page should consist of the outbound links to your linking partners. You can chose to create a form for other people to offer their site for review as you might of done, or simply add an email address them to contact you. The amount of links that you have on your links page should not be excessive. In fact, in the eyes of search engines, like Google, it is not about how many links you have but how many are quality links. Do not bother linking to sites that are not reciprocating back to you on your links page. If you have relevant information that you wish a visitor to view, then add a link to the page of your site that the information pertains to. Your links page should be respected, as you do not want to just link to every website out there, nor do you want to be considered a link farm. Remember: five good links are better than fifteen weak ones.

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Appendix C: Backlinks

Backlinks, or inbound links, are links to your website from other websites, usually related to yours in some way. They are useful tools for good Search Engine Optimization (SEO). The search engines find a link to your site on another site, and automatically follow it. Your site is then indexed without the necessity of manually entering your information into each search engine. Backlinking is the preferred indexing method.

Backlink Structure

A backlink is basically a URL with identifying text or an image added. Make sure that the link is specific to the desired location, i.e. the front page, or a specific article or blog post. The link will need a keyword that is relevant, preferably one that is not in the title of your blog, article, or website. Search engines will already see the title in the URL.

A backlink looks like this:

<A HREF= https://forum.citizen.apps.gov/yourforumname >keyword(s)</A>

The hyperlink produced will look like this: keyword(s).

Basic Rules

- Include key words or phrases in link text (or in html tags ALT & TITLE in an image backlink).
- Keep link text as short as possible.
- Locate keyword and\or key phrases as close to the beginning of the text as possible.
- Use BOLD \ STRONG html tags, if possible.

Generating Backlinks

Backlinks can be included in various places. You can use them in signatures in forum posts, in the resource box attached to posted articles, or, most commonly, in blog comment posts.

There are a several basic ways to build inbound links:

- Exchange links with related websites, known as reciprocal linking.
- Create one-way links by submitting to web directories, getting friendly websites to backlink, or publishing talkbacks on discussion groups & blogs.
- Insert a keyword in the "name" area of a blog comment, and then your URL.
- Publish content-related articles containing hyperlinks (either in the text itself or in your signature).
- Find sites to contact directly using third-party keyword search software.